

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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R 261703Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6025

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DUBLIN 1345

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJ: CRUISE O'BRIEN'S VERSION OF NI POLICY

SUMMARY: LEAKAGE OF A PAPER ON NORTHERN IRELAND BY MINISTER CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN HAS BEEN SHARPLY CONDEMNED BY POLITICIANS AND PRESS. PAPER DOES APPEAR TO HAVE SERIOUS DEFECTS. ITS PUBLICATION PROBABLY WORKS AGAINST THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION CRUISE O'BRIEN CLEARLY WANTS. END SUMMARY

1. IRISH NEWSPAPERS SEPTEMBER 26 AND 27 CONTAIN PAPER ON GOVT'S NI POLICY BY MINISTER CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. IT WAS INTENDED AS A "CONFIDENTIAL" LABOR PARTY DISCUSSION PAPER, AND WAS PURPORTEDLY LEAKED IN BELFAST. CRUISE O'BRIEN'S VIEWS ARE ACCEPTED AS SIGNIFICANT, AS HE IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE IMPORTANT ROLE IN FORMING GOI POLICY TOWARD NI.

2. HE SAYS THAT DUBLIN'S MAIN POLICY GOAL IS TO "AVERT THE EMERGENCE OF A LOYALIST MAJORITY IN THE (NI CONSTITUTIONAL) CONVENTION ELECTIONS." A "NOISY AND THREATENING DUBLIN POSTURE WOULD HELP TO MAKE A LOYALIST VICTORY CERTAIN. DUBLIN HAD THEREFORE ADOPTED A "LOW PROFILE" IN

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ORDER TO "ALLOW THE EMERGENCE OF A NON-LOYALIST PROTESTANT

VOTE."

3. CRUISE O'BRIEN DREW A GLOOMY DETAILED SCENARIO OF THE "SERIOUS DANGER" THAT WOULD RESULT IF A LOYALIST MAJORITY DID SUCCEED IN DOMINATING THE NI CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, LOYALISTS MIGHT DISREGARD BRITISH WHITE PAPER AND PROCLAIM THEMSELVES "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NI." LOYALIST PARAMILITARY GROUPS WOULD THEN BE RECOGNIZED AS SECURITY FORCES BY NEW "PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.". BRITISH WOULD HAVE TO ACQUIESCE OR BE DRAWN INTO MILITARY SITUATION IN WHICH THEY WOULD BE FIRED ON FROM BOTH CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT AREAS. FACED WITH THIS DANGER, BRITISH ARMY WOULD INFORM HMG THAT ITS POSITION WAS UNTENABLE, AND BRITISH WOULD WITHDRAW FROM NI AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. IN ABSENCE OF BRITISH TROOPS, CIVIL WAR WOULD BE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN. IT WOULD PRODUCE HEAVY CASUALTIES AMONG NI CATHOLICS, AND ALSO IN REPUBLIC AS RESULT OF "RETALIATORY" RAIDS AND BOMBINGS BY LOYALISTS. THERE WOULD BE MASSIVE DISRUPTION OF ECONOMY THROUGHOUT IRELAND AND INFLUX OF NOT LESS THAN ONE-QUARTER MILLION NI CATHOLIC REFUGEES INTO SOUTH.

4. CRUISE O'BRIEN ARGUED THAT IRISH ARMY WOULD HAVE NO CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO BESEIGED NI CATHOLICS ON ANY SIGNIFICANT SCALE. UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE WOULD ALSO BE INEFFECTIVE: "THE MOST THE UN WOULD IN FACT BE LIKELY TO DO WOULD BE TO PROVIDE A KIND OF PEACE LINE AFTER A CEASE-FIRE -- IN EFFECT ON A NEW BORDER . . . IF THINGS GO VERY BADLY WE MIGHT NEED THE UN FOR SUCH PURPOSES, BUT IT WOULD BE WRONG TO EXPECT THAT THEY WOULD BE EITHER WILLING OR ABLE TO DO MUCH MORE."

5. PRESS AND POLITICAL REACTION IS SHARPLY CRITICAL. OPPOSITION FIANNA FAIL SPOKESMEN HAVE CALLED ON PM COSGRAVE FOR A BELATED STATEMENT OF POLICY AND CONDEMNED HIS MINISTER'S PERSONAL EXPLANATION. SDLP HAS VOICED ANGER AT CRUISE O'BRIEN'S UNINTENDED ASSISTANCE TO BOTH IRA AND HARD-LINE LOYALISTS -- AT A TIME WHEN SDLP IS FIGHTING A TOUGH ELECTION CAMPAIGN. LOYALISTS HAVE SEIZED ON THIS NEW EVIDENCE OF DUBLIN SCHEMING. SOUTHERN NEWSPAPERS, WHILE WELCOMING MANY OF CRUISE O'BRIEN'S IDEAS, GENERALLY VIEW IMPACT OF HIS PAPER AS CONFIDENTIAL

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DISASTROUS.

6. COMMENT: THIS DISCUSSION PAPER IS MOST COMPLETE AND COHERENT EXPLANATION WE HAVE HEARD OF GOI POLICY TOWARD NI. FACT THAT CRUISE O'BRIEN IS AUTHOR REINFORCES WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT HE HAS ALMOST A DOMINANT INFLUENCE ON NI POLICY, EVEN THOUGH HIS MINISTRY (POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS) IS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, CRUISE O'BRIEN'S CASE IS VERY WELL MADE. WE AGREE

WITH HIS EXPLANATION OF THE LIMITS OF A POTENTIAL UN ROLE. WE ALSO AGREE (AS DO MOST OTHER OBSERVERS) WITH HIS ARGUMENT THAT SOUTH SHOULD AVOID A "NOISY AND THREATENING" POSTURE TOWARD NI PROTESTANTS. BUT SEVERAL OTHER ANGLES OF THIS LEAKED DOCUMENT SEEM TROUBLESOME.

(A) GOI POLICY HAS AGAIN BEEN MADE TO LOOK UNCOORDINATED AND LACKING IN LEADERSHIP FROM PM COSGRAVE. CRUISE O'BRIEN COULD CLEARLY NOT HAVE EXPECTED THAT ANY DOCUMENTS CIRCULATED AROUND LABOR PARTY WOULD REMAIN "CONFIDENTIAL" FOR VERY LONG.

(B) PUBLICATION OF THIS DOCUMENT HAS PREDICTABLY ANGERED BOTH NORTHERN PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS. IN EFFECT, CRUISE O'BRIEN IS PROPOSING A POLICY THAT COULD ONLY WORK IF PROTESTANTS DID NOT UNDERSTAND IT. NOTHING THIS DEVIOUS WOULD STAND MUCH CHANCE IN IRELAND, WHERE PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION ARE UNRESTRAINED.

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(C) CRUISE O'BRIEN'S BASIC PREMISE IS THAT A "LOW PROFILE" POLICY FROM DUBLIN MIGHT "HELP TO AVERT" A HARD-LINE PROTESTANT MAJORITY IN NI CONSTITUTIONAL ELECTIONS. THIS APPEARS COMPLETELY UNREALISTIC. MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A HARD-LINE MAJORITY AND THAT DUBLIN CANNOT DO MUCH ABOUT IT. CRUISE O'BRIEN IS CERTAINLY RIGHT IN THINKING THAT BLUSTER FROM DUBLIN WOULD HARDEN PROTESTANT

POSITION, BUT HE MAY HAVE MADE AN ELEMENTARY ERROR IN LOGIC WHEN HE REVERSED THE PROPOSITION AND CONCLUDED THAT A "LOW PROFILE" WOULD SOFTEN THE LOYALISTS.

(D) BRITISH WOULD PRESUMABLY NOT ACCEPT IDEA THAT THEIR TROOPS COULD SUDDENLY BE FORCED OUT OF NI. MANY IRISH OBSERVERS HOWEVER, DO SHARE THIS BELIEF WITH CRUISE O'BRIEN.

(E) LOCALLY, IT IS EVEN MORE CONTROVERSIAL TO EXCLUDE IRISH ARMY AS A POTENTIAL BARRIER BETWEEN NI CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND PROTESTANT FORCES. IT IS PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY THAT IRISH ARMY COULD DO LITTLE TO HELP BELFAST CATHOLICS, BUT IT MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF PLAYING SOME ROLE IN BORDER AREAS. BY ENTIRELY EXCLUDING THIS POSSIBILITY, CRUISE O'BRIEN IS SUPPORTING THE CLAIM OF THE IRA TO BE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY'S SAFEST LINE OF DEFENSE.

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UM ONE MUST CONCLUDE THAT LEAKAGE OF THIS DOCUMENT WORKS AGAINST THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION THAT CRUISE O'BRIEN SINCERELY WANTS. PART OF THE PROBLEM LIES IN BAD TIMING AND ABSENCE OF COORDINATION WITHIN GOVT. PART ALSO LIES IN THE POLICY ITSELF. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER CRUISE O'BRIEN MAY HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED BY DESIRE TO GET SPOTLIGHT BACK ON HIMSELF. IN ANY CASE, THIS EXPLANATION OF HIS "LOW PROFILE" POLICY HAS GONE A LONG WAY TOWARD ENDING ANYTHING IT MIGHT HAVE ACHIEVED.

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